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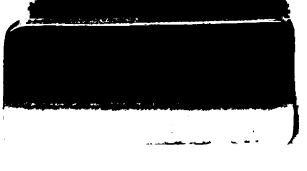
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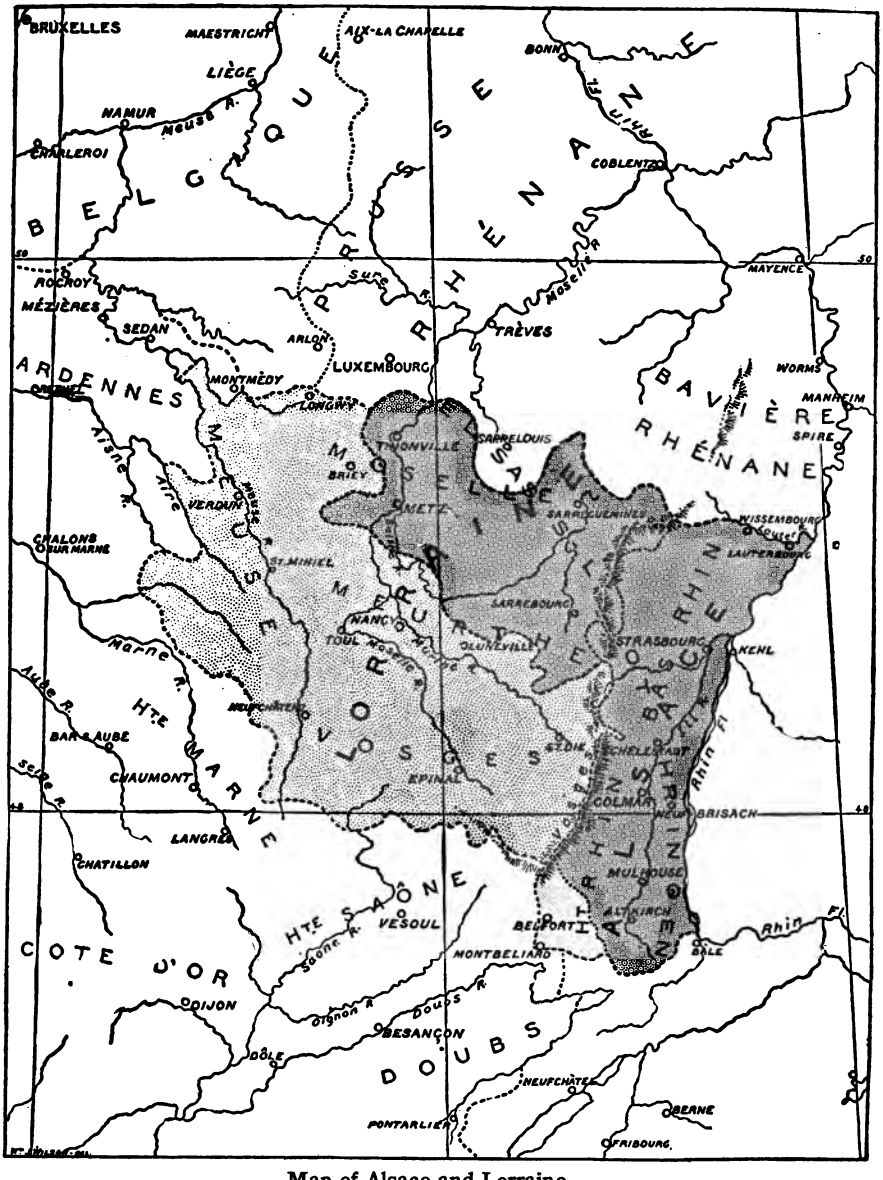
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Map of Alsace and Lorraine

The darker shading shows portion of territory ceded to Germany in 1871

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Alsace-Lorraine

A Study of the Relations of the Two Provinces to France and to Germany and a Presentation of the Just Claims of their People

By

Daniel Blumenthal

Formerly Deputy from Strasbourg in the Reichstag; Senator from Alsace-Lorraine; and Mayor of the City of Colmar

With an Introduction by

Douglas Wilson Johnson

Associate Professor of Physiography in Columbia University

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press
1917

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The Knickerbocker Press, New York

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INTRODUCTION

THE problem of Alsace-Lorraine is in a very real sense an American problem. We entered this war to help crush the Teutonic scheme of world domination and to free the democratic nations of the earth from the menace of militaristic autocracy. Any issue which involves these fundamental causes of American intervention in the great struggle must command the careful attention of every thoughtful American citizen.

Alsace and Lorraine provide just such an issue. In 1871 these provinces were forcibly torn from France and annexed to a militaristic autocracy, despite the bitter protests of the mother country and the impassioned appeals of her unfortunate children. This crime was but one of many incident to the scheme of building up a world empire controlled by a Prussianized Germany; but in a

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peculiar degree it outraged the democratic sympathies of the world and enhanced the prestige of autocratic militarism in the opinion of the German people. As the most recent and most striking fruit of the Prussian policy of conquest, Alsace-Lorraine is today the visible pledge of the professed efficiency of autocracy and the supposed decadence of democracy.

The vindication of democracy demands the "disannexation" of Alsace-Lorraine and its return to democratic France. The security of the world demands that the Prussian policy of military conquest be discredited and destroyed by depriving the German people of the unholy profits of that policy. Justice to the mother country and to her lost children demands that their combined protests be heard and that the crime of '71 be rectified. Americans are fighting for the vindication of democracy, for the security of the world, and for the triumph of justice. When they fully understand that a peace which should leave Alsace-Lorraine under

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German control would be a denial of democracy, a peril to civilization, and a travesty on justice, our chivalrous people will refuse to lay down the sword until the lost children of our gallant Ally are restored to their rightful sovereignty.

No one is more eminently qualified to bring to the American people the facts in the case of Alsace-Lorraine than is the Honourable Daniel Blumenthal. Himself an Alsatian by birth, he can speak from the heart on behalf of his brothers and sisters. Honoured by his fellow citizens with election to the high office of mayor of the important Alsatian city of Colmar for a period of nine years, he speaks with the authority of one who has the full confidence of those Alsatians who know him best. A member of the German Reichstag and of the Alsace-Lorraine Senate for many years, he speaks with peculiar knowledge of the Imperial Government's treatment of the conquered lands. Condemned to death eight times and carrying sentences aggregating more than five hundred years

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of penal servitude, all imposed upon him by the Imperial German Government because he escaped from the Empire to tell the world the truth about Alsace-Lorraine, he comes to us with the highest recommendations which the Prussian autocracy has power to give. Americans will read with unusual interest his testimony regarding the lost provinces of France.

DOUGLAS WILSON JOHNSON.

NEW YORK CITY,
November 1, 1917.

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Alsace-Lorraine

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The Problem of Alsace-Lorraine

THE problem of Alsace-Lorraine began with the Treaty of Frankfort made between the German Empire and the French Republic, May 10, 1871. Beaten by the German armies, France, at the mouth of the cannon, was forced, notwithstanding the solemn protests of the inhabitants, to give up part of her territory.

The Alsace-Lorraine problem has a three-fold character. It concerns Germany, France, and the World.

France not having stipulated in the Treaty of Frankfort any clause as to the treatment of the people of Alsace-Lorraine now become German, the German Empire

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alone had the formal right to decide their fate, and it is *vis-à-vis* to Germany that Alsace-Lorraine must make its claims.

The question of the rule of Alsace-Lorraine became a problem of the internal policy of the Empire, and therefore a purely German affair.

The French Government has always scrupulously respected the Treaty of Frankfort, but the French people have never given up the hope of redressing the gross wrong of 1871, and all the French policy has been based on the necessity of protection against renewed German aggression. In vain did Germany declare that no Alsace-Lorraine question existed; not only does this question exist, but it has become the principal obstacle in the way of political reconciliation between France and Germany. Whether one wishes it or not, it is *the* Franco-German question *par excellence*. At the same time it has an *international* character of the highest importance. The form of alliances, the bidding for armaments, the terms of armed

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peace, these were the natural consequences of this state of things. France never would have undertaken, and Alsace-Lorraine never would have demanded, a war of revenge to secure the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France. But since the horrors of war have been let loose upon the world by the criminal folly of Germany, the problem of Alsace-Lorraine has become a *world problem* of the highest importance.

From the beginning of the war, the president of the French Republic, the president of the Senate, the president of the Chamber of Deputies, the president of the Council, and all the heads of government who have succeeded one another, and recently Parliament itself, the Senate, and Chamber of Deputies, all have in accord with the whole French nation, manifested the unshaken determination not to end the war without the assurance of the return of Alsace-Lorraine to the mother country.

Alsace-Lorraine has constituted a striking example of the denial of the principle of the

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right of the people to govern themselves, but now the question has become actually of great practical importance. Being the principal object of France in the future peace treaty, it is quite natural that all the nations, and above all the belligerent ones, should be obliged to give to it very particular attention. Even for the United States, who will have a most important rôle to play in the Congress of Peace, the question of Alsace-Lorraine is one which they cannot treat as being of interest only to France and Germany. In its nature and from the fact that it is the corner-stone of the first claim to be made by France, it concerns right and justice.

It is consequently opportune that even those who up to the present time have had no special reason for interest in Alsace-Lorraine should come to know certain facts about this little country in order to be able to form for themselves a just and trustworthy opinion of the disputed question.

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TERRITORY

Alsace-Lorraine is bounded on the north by Bavaria, Prussia, Luxembourg, and France; on the south by Switzerland and France, on the east by the Grand Duchy of Baden, and on the west by France. It is entirely made up of territory surrendered by France to Germany by the Treaty of Frankfort. This included the following parts of France: the Department of the Lower Rhine, the Department of the Upper Rhine with the exception of Belfort, three quarters of the Department of Moselle, a third of the Department of Meurthe, and two cantons of the Vosges. The area is about 14,500 square kilometres.

POPULATION

German official statistics give on the 1st of December, 1871, a population of 1,554,738 inhabitants. The last Census of 1910 gives 1,874,014 souls (967,625 men, 906,389 women). This population includes about 1,500,000 Alsaces-Lorraines of French de-

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scent, who themselves or their parents were born in Alsace-Lorraine before the 1st of May, 1871, and who, except for the Treaty of Frankfort, would have been French. The aliens (notably the Italians, French, Swiss, and the people of Luxembourg) make up a contingent of about 75,000. The rest, 300,000 in all, are German immigrants since the War of 1870–71, and their descendants, including the military and government officials with their families.

The original French people of the ceded territories were allowed to preserve their French nationality on condition of making an express declaration before October 1, 1872, and to transfer, within the same extension of time, their domicile outside of Alsace-Lorraine. From the official German reports, there were about 160,000 options declared in Alsace-Lorraine, of which only 50,000 were valid. The options given in France amounted to about 380,000. The statistics of emigration and immigration for 1871–1910 give an excess of emigration of 267,639

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souls. The result of the migration of the population in August, 1914, can thus be characterized: some hundred thousand Alsatians left the country, the greater part of whom settled in France. The number of the native population has remained stationary; 300,000 Germans and 75,000 foreigners must be added. The German population is almost entirely concentrated in the cities. In Metz, the immigrants make up the majority; in Strasbourg, they are a third of the population. In the country, one finds in general only a few officials.

Concerning the language, distinction must be made between Alsace and Lorraine. In most parts of Lorraine, French is spoken exclusively, whereas, in the greater part of Alsace, we find a German patois mixed up with many French words and expressions; and so entirely distinct is it from the *hochdeutsch* of the Germans, that after forty-seven years they are not able to understand it. Everyone who is at all educated speaks French, in spite of the obstacles the Germans are

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always putting in the way of teaching the French tongue. All who know French speak it from preference, and no one who speaks good German, and they have all learned it in the schools, ever use it in private life. The official language is of course German.

As to religion: after the Census of 1910, there were found to be 85% Catholics, 13% Protestants, 1½% Jews, and a ½% miscellaneous. The *professional* Census of 1907 gives the following results: about one fourth of the population are in agriculture, half are occupied in commerce and industry, and a quarter enter the liberal professions or follow no trade at all.

As to the ethnological origin of the aboriginal people, the Germans at once declare that Alsace was settled by the Teutons. About Lorraine they prefer to be silent. But while it is certain that Alsace after the migration of the tribes presents a mixed population composed of Celtic and Germanic elements, it would be very difficult to analyse today such an amalgamation. Do not let

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us forget that Julius Cæsar in his famous work, *De Bello Gallico*, has said that the country of the Celts which he calls Galli (Gaul) was bounded by the "*flumen Rhenum*" (the Rhine), and Tacitus, the illustrious historian, declares: "*Germania omnis a Gallis Rheno separatur*" (the whole of Germany is separated from Gaul by the Rhine).

The invasion of Alsace by Ariovistus was victoriously repulsed at the battle of Ochsenfeld 58 B.C., and a new attempt of the Germanic tribes to invade Alsace in 357 A.D. failed before the army of Julian the Philosopher. During the centuries of Roman domination, which have left deep traces on the country (building of cities, construction of roads, commercial and industrial development of all kinds), Alsace enjoyed great prosperity. Moreover, a recent authoritative work, *Wohin gehoert Elsass-Lothringen*, shows that from the last scientific researches, the shape of the German skull, which the Germans love to indicate as the sign of the superiority of the German race, is repre-

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sented in Alsace only in the proportion of one to three, and the so-called Germanic type (blue eyes and yellow hair) is nowhere predominant.

Alsace is in fact a conclusive example of the fact that the use of a dialect of German origin does not necessarily indicate the race of those who speak it and certainly does not prove a community of sentiments or ideas. This applies also to the German names of the Alsatian communes.

Let us remember on this subject, that very recently German names have been officially given to French localities in Lorraine. When the Germans wish to accomplish a master stroke of policy they are careful to quote the Herren Professoren in justification of the establishment of an historic precedent. Renan, in a mildly bantering spirit, complimented them on their extraordinary talent in these ridiculous attempts. "With the philosophy of history," says he, "as practised by the Germans, there are no legal rights in the world but those of the

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ourang-outangs, unjustly deprived of these by the perfidy of civilized man."

In the main, it matters little to whom Alsace-Lorraine has belonged during the vicissitudes of history. That only which is important from the point of view of modern history is the act of 1871 by which Germany tore Alsace-Lorraine from France when all the inhabitants of the ceded territories were thoroughly French and wished so to remain. This is the truth, and it is confirmed by an authority little suspected by the Germans. Professor Theobald Ziegler, who up to the present moment was Professor of Science at the University of Strasbourg, and a liberal democrat, has changed to a pan-Germanist of the most pronounced type. Here is what the Herr Professor Ziegler acknowledges, writing in the review *Die Grenzboten*, March 31, 1915: "What makes a nation? Not the feeling of race nor the consciousness of belonging to the same stock which is often lost in the uncertainty and obscurity of history; not the soil, which may be trans-

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ferred from one people to another as in the case of Alsace; not the language—one has only to think of Switzerland where three languages are spoken; not even interests in common, for these exist in every society, but just the living together of two centuries shared with the great nation of France has made Alsace-Lorraine French."

But Ziegler and his friends have forgotten that to live together there must be mutual understanding and esteem. History teaches that no appreciable advantage is to be gained unless the peoples agree, or if one nation tries to impose its brutal domination over another. And yet it is just this which is the great obstacle that prevents Germany from assimilating Alsace-Lorraine and has condemned all its efforts to eternal failure.

INCOMPATIBILITY OF DISPOSITION OF THE GERMANS AND THE INHABITANTS OF ALSACE-LORRAINE

In his excellent volume, *The Peril of Prussianism*, Professor Douglas W. Johnson has

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traced, in a masterly fashion, the difference between the two ideals of government, one starting with the principle that the State is made to serve the people, the other, that the people are made to serve the State, a view personified by the Kaiser in Germany today.

The Alsaces-Lorraines have always had great independence of character; they are thoroughly democratic and republican, for which reason they so quickly and solidly became a part of the French nation, which, even under different forms of monarchical government, respected their liberty and democratic ideals.

The political history of Alsace-Lorraine furnishes a new proof of this fact on every page. Lorraine became a part of France at the Convention of Friedwald in Hessen, January 14, 1552, when the German Protestant princes at war with the Catholic House of Austria, gave Metz, Toul, and Verdun to the King of France, Henry II., in exchange for subsidies furnished by France.

In the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648,

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Alsace was ceded to France in exchange for services which the King gave to the German Protestant princes fighting against the Catholic Empire. Alsace was conquered for France by the German Prince, Bernard de Saxe-Weimar, on the demand and in the interest of Germany which had called upon France for help. Strasbourg, which had remained a free independent city, opened her gates to France in 1681. The Republic of Mulhouse, which made a part of Helvetia, asked, and obtained the request, to be incorporated into France in 1798. Neither Alsace nor Lorraine ever made part of the German Empire founded in 1871, and to which vanquished France was obliged to give up these territories. When these two provinces came into the possession of France, they were bound by rather loose ties to the Holy Roman Empire, of which the House of Austria was at the head. The Austria-Hungary Empire did not survive the Napoleonic wars, and I do not know that it ever claimed any part of Alsace-Lorraine.

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On the contrary, in order to found the German Empire and appropriate Alsace-Lorraine, Prussia had to make war on Austria in 1866 to put her out of Germany. The German Empire is wrong, therefore, in making an appeal to anything but *force* to explain, if not to justify the spoliation of France. Alsace-Lorraine was never a political entity before 1871. We have seen that Alsace was still a part of the Holy Roman Empire, while Lorraine had already belonged to France for a hundred years.

Alsace, alone, had never been a state. This is how the learned professor of the University of Caen, Georges Weil, describes in his remarkable book, *French Alsace from 1789 to 1871*, the period after the reunion of Alsace with France: "It was a strange mosaic of different freeholds, of principalities both lay and ecclesiastical, of free cities or those almost autonomous. Among these freeholds many belonged to German princes. A sixth part of Alsace was owned by foreigners." The Emperor's authority had been

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only nominal. On his visits, which were few and far between, he was received with courtesy, money was freely given to him, but the people always rejoiced when they saw him leave. The Alsatians received but little assistance from the Empire; Alsace secured no help when menaced or invaded by foreign armies. The ten ancient cities flourished under an almost autonomous rule. Even before the reunion with France, cultivated society was filled with the French spirit. After the Thirty Years' War, the country felt the benefit of the protection of a powerful State with a well-ordered government which respected its habits and customs and which administered justice. So their sympathies were quickly given to their new political country with which, by reason of their democratic ideals, they were already politically in sympathy. That which rapidly attached the people to the new régime was, on the one hand, the friendly and intelligent interest of the royal intendants who protected the subjects from arbitrary lords and other

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local authorities, and on the other hand, the sovereign Council of Alsace, sitting at Colmar, which was to simplify, and, if possible, to unify, the customs that were in force in different parts of the country and also insure a sound administration of justice. The success was complete. A German, François d'Ichterscheim, was obliged to acknowledge, in a work published in 1710, that the Sovereign Council "rules with strict justice, law-suits are not too lengthy, expenses are not too heavy, and above all, no favour is shown to either litigant, the subject often winning his suit against the sovereign,—the poor against the rich, the layman against the clergy, the Christian against the Jew, and *vice-versa*."

The people were contented and satisfied. The Alsatian has always had a pronounced taste for the military career. Many young peasants enlisted in French regiments and were well received. The nobility furnished a number of officers to the French army. Alsatian gentlemen enjoyed taking part in

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the gay social life of the French aristocracy. Alsatian scholars kept in constant touch with Paris, where they received every encouragement and were much appreciated. It is not astonishing then, that Monsieur Schmettan, Ambassador of Russia to the King of France, should write in 1709: "It is well-known that the Alsatians are more French than the Parisians themselves."

The holding in common of the same ideas and feelings was even more accentuated at the time of the Revolution, and no part of France was better prepared by her past history for the coming of a rule of Democracy and Equality. In 1787, Alsace was called upon for the first time to elect a Provincial Assembly which would represent the interests of a large number of domains, princely seignorial, and municipal, the commission chosen to make a report to the Assembly declared: "That which tends to feudalism carries a mark of servitude not to be tolerated in a well-constituted society." In the elections for the Etats Généraux, the little

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bourgeoisie won in all the cities against the oligarchy which desired to retain the control. Reubell, who played an important rôle in the Revolution, and who was a member of the Directory, was elected at Colmar. The peasants hailed with enthusiasm the decree of August 4, 1789, which marked the end of the feudal régime. The suppression of the custom-house duties between Alsace and the rest of France sealed the economic union between the new and the old countries so that the creation of the departments of the Upper and the Lower Rhine was effected without any difficulty.

After the proclamation of the equality of the French people, the right to levy on the feudal rents in France, which the German princes who owned property in Alsace had exercised, could no longer exist. The Germans protested and the conflict which followed, in 1792, was the first war against the French Republic.

In the report which the well-known civilian, Merlin de Douai, made to the *Constituante*, October 28, 1790, is the following passage,

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very characteristic of the bonds which unite Alsace to France: "The Alsatian people have united themselves to France because they wish so to do; it is their own desire, therefore, and not the treaty of Münster which has legalized the union."

In February, 1790, Dietrich was elected mayor of Strasbourg against the conservative candidate, and in June, 1790, the partisans of the *Constituante* celebrated amid great pomp and with the co-operation of the clergy of different denominations, the fêtes of the Federation of the Rhine.

The Alsatian National Guard set up in the middle of a bridge over the Rhine, a tri-coloured flag which bore the inscription: "Here the Land of Liberty begins."

It was on the night following the day that it was known at Strasbourg (April 25, 1792), that war had been declared, that Captain Rouget de l'Isle composed "the War Song for the Army of the Rhine," which under the name of *La Marseillaise* became the national hymn of France.

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Kléber, who at that time commanded a battalion from the Upper Rhine, writes, November 15, 1792, in reference to the warlike enthusiasm of the Alsatian volunteers, "not one of them ever dreams of deserting his flag; the wounded, yes, and even the sick have implored me for mercy's sake, to keep them with the battalion."

In 1799, there was the menace of another war, and the inhabitants were most zealous in strengthening the fortresses. An official of the Lower Rhine wrote in his report on the subject of the Alsatians: "They will, like the Rhine, always be the impregnable bulwark of the Republic" (G. Weil).

The assimilation of France and Alsace was made complete during the Revolution. Fustel de Coulanges well summed up this truth when he wrote in 1870: "Do you know what has made Alsace French? It is not Louis XIV., but it is our revolution of 1789. From that moment Alsace has followed our fortunes; she has lived our life; she thinks as we think; she feels as we feel;

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our glories and our faults, our joys and our sorrows."

The wars of the Empire gave to the Alsatians a chance to display their military aptitude which they rendered the more generously to the service of the country, as promotion was given to each according to his merits; each soldier carried in his knapsack the baton of a Maréchal de France!

The generals of Alsace and of Lorraine who distinguished themselves in the army of the Republic and with Napoleon are numerous. Among the best known are Kléber, Kellermann, Rapp, Lefévre, Ney, Mouton, Lasalle, Shérer, Westermann, and Schramm. The names of twenty-eight Alsatian generals are engraved upon the Arc de Triomphe at Paris.

Many able Alsatians devoted themselves to the administration of the German countries that were at that time under the French Government. Their knowledge of German helped them in their task. After

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the disasters in Russia and in Leipzig, in 1813, the Alsatians showed exemplary devotion in their preparations for defence and sacrifices for the army.

In his *Mémoires*, Ségur says on this subject: "There were no better, braver, more generous Frenchmen in all France." Never, during all these trying days, did they remember that their forebears had been subjects of the Holy Empire.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, after the fall of Napoleon, the pan-Germans made a campaign for the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine in launching the slogan: *Der Rhein, Deutschlands Strom nicht Deutschlands Grenze* (The Rhine is a German river and not Germany's boundary). This found no echo in Alsace, which forced from the poet, Rückert, the heartfelt cry of indignation which fell from the lips of the German soldiers, who were obliged to evacuate Alsace: "And thou Alsace! Degermanized race, thou too dost jeer at us, oh, deepest infamy!"

The Alsatian poet, Ehrenfried Stoeber,

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whom the Germans readily invoked on account of his dialect, said that if his harp was German his sword was French. Referring to the Revolution he said: "If we speak of the wars of the Revolution in which we fought for our independence and the protection of the indefeasible rights of man, it is because we are proud of our fervent ardour and enthusiasm."

Under the restored kingdom of the Bourbons, orderly citizens knew how to command respect in their new country without sacrificing in the least their democratic and republican ideals. A prefect of the Upper Rhine registered in his report of 1818: "All are submissive, but none are royalist." De Serre, an elector of the Department wrote: "Ultra-royalism is not the spirit which actuates my constituents."

The prefect, Puymaigre, candidly complains in 1821 of the advanced ideas of the citizens: "They give faith," said he, "with a most deplorable credulity, to all the most dangerous political systems."

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The same year, after his tour in Alsace, General Foy expressed himself as follows: "If all that is good and generous in the hearts of the inhabitants of ancient France ever becomes enfeebled, they must journey over the Vosges and come to Alsace to renew their patriotism and energy."

The monarchy of July marks a period of uninterrupted prosperity for Alsace. The return of the tri-colour was hailed with joy. The democratic idea grew and was represented chiefly by the *Courrier du Bas-Rhin* which influenced public opinion. After 1815, the reactionary persecutions abated against the Germans who were liberal minded and they received an hospitable welcome to Alsace. With their innate absence of tact, many of them tried to convince their hosts that Alsace was still a German province, and in this way they forfeited all sympathy.

The Alsatians desire there should be no misunderstanding as to the nature of the sympathy shown to unjustly persecuted refugees, and the international courtesy

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practised by them even towards the Germans. In 1842, when the German delegates to the Scientific Congress of France were received at Strasbourg, the mouthpiece of the Alsatians spoke of the sympathies of his countrymen for Germany; but to avoid any mistake he added: "But if we gaze toward her, it is not with the eyes of a child torn from the paternal home, but rather, if you will permit the comparison, with the affectionate look with which the young wife greets once more her mother's house, happy under the new roof which shelters her, and with the name of her husband which she bears with pride."

Alsace has never wavered from this fidelity to France. In 1848 the second Republic was accepted with satisfaction. Under Louis Philippe the country had enjoyed great material prosperity, but the middle classes were restless because the government took no measures to reform the electorate in the democratic sense. At this time great fêtes were held to celebrate the two hundredth anniversary of the union of Alsace and France.

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The mayor of Strasbourg said on this occasion: "It is without doubt no longer necessary to make a solemn and public profession of undying devotion to France. She does not doubt us, she has faith in Alsace; but if Germany still lulls herself with futile illusions, if she still finds in the persistence of the German language a sign of irresistible sympathy and attraction toward her, she is mistaken. Alsace is just as much French as Brittany, Flanders, and the country of the Basques, and she will so remain."

The affection of France kept pace always with the profession of democratic and republican ideals. When the prince-president came to Strasbourg in 1850, he was received in all the villages of Alsace with shouts of *Vive la Republique!* The municipal council of Strasbourg had refused to give any funds for his reception. At Strasbourg and at Mulhouse the National Guard was dismissed by the government. The Colonel of the Strasbourg Legion said in his farewell address: "It is true that at times you express

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with great vigour republican sentiments, but this is with you an original sin, and I fear me that the remedy applied will not be effectual in its correction."

During the Second Empire, Alsace was a hotbed of republican resistance, particularly in the Upper Rhine. However, at this time, the country again enjoyed a great prosperity. The military career continued to attract the Alsatians. The great advantages assured to the reinlisted soldiers induced many of them to enter the army as volunteers. The wars in Algeria under Louis Philippe had already shown, among the combatants, a great number of Alsatians. The intellectual culture of the provinces turned towards France and made great progress. Erckmann and Chatrian expressed marvellously well the aspirations and democratic ideals of the people in magnifying the rôles of the Alsatians and the Lorrainers in the heroic period of the Revolution and the First Empire.

The peoples of Alsace and Lorraine were, like those of the rest of France, divided into

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political parties, and one often saw disagreements, generally legal, with the ideas of the respective governments. But no one ever evinced the slightest regret at no longer belonging to the Holy Empire, or the least desire to re-enter the bosom of Germany. When the War of 1870 broke out, Alsace and Lorraine were very French, and during that war the people of both provinces bravely and patriotically did their duty to France. The people were thus badly prepared for a change of nationality, and far from looking on their new Teuton compatriots as brothers, they cordially detested the Germans who during the war had conducted themselves to the limit of savagery. The forced community of life with the Germans soon showed an irreconcilable opposition between the native and the immigrant population.

Alsace-Lorraine could live whole centuries with the Germans without becoming germanized, whereas two centuries of life in common with France, freely consented to, had proved sufficient to make them French-

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men. This spontaneous fusion could never have been possible if Alsace-Lorraine and France had not always had the same ideals of civilization. The Alsatian and the Lorrainer leaned always toward French culture, and from the moment they were politically separated from the Holy Empire they had nothing more in common with German *Kultur*.

The Alsatian-Lorrainer, who from the point of view of character greatly resembles the free citizen of America, is a very practical man. He willingly makes use of all the opportunities in life to improve his economic condition, but joined to these qualities is a deeply rooted idealism which will make any sacrifice to secure his independence, and to assure for him the dignity of freedom. He has brilliant military qualities, but he will never be a militarist. He will fight bravely for the defence of a just cause about which he is enthusiastic, because it means the fulfilment of a sacred duty. But he will never be willing to remain under the dominion of a

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power like that of Prussia and be forced to carry arms for causes that he detests and disdains. The Alsatian-Lorrainer has no affection for dynasty, he is absolutely wanting in respect for the hierarchy; he has a feeling for order and equality before the law, he is loyal and respectful to authority but exempt from all servitude. The German, on the contrary, with his class feeling, abasing himself, as it were, in platitudes before his superiors, hard and arrogant toward his inferiors, in admiration before the *Angestammtes Herrscherhaus* (traditional dynasty), accustomed to march under the lash, without any idealism, finding in the distribution of the booty of war a compensation for all humiliations,—such a man does not understand that the Alsatian-Lorrainer does not rejoice to find himself belonging to a nation of the elect, a nation that has the most formidable war machine to crush, from time to time according to its whim, any growth of material prosperity effected by free competition in the economic struggle.

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Alsace-Lorraine is impervious to those ideas. Against her will, she was torn from France and she wishes to return. It is this which makes clear her history from 1871 to this day.

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THE PROTEST

As soon as it was a question of the necessity of giving up a part of the territory, all the deputies of the threatened departments signed a declaration, February 17, 1871, which, among other passages, contained the following: "Alsace and Lorraine do not wish to be alienated. Associated for more than two centuries with France, both in good and bad fortune, these two provinces, exposed without intermission to the blows of the enemy, have constantly sacrificed themselves for the greatness of the nation; they have sealed with their blood the insoluble compact which binds them to France. Made doubtful by the claims of the enemy,

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they assert, through all the obstacles and all the dangers under the yoke even of the invader, their unshaken fidelity. Unanimously the citizens in their homes, the soldiers who rallied beneath the flag, those who voted and those who fought, all signified to Germany and to the world the immutable will of Alsace and of Lorraine to remain French."

March 1, 1871, the same deputies signed a new protest which they deposited at the bureau of the National Assembly in which we find the following announcement: "We declare once more null and void a pact which disposes of us without our consent. The claim to our rights always remains open to each and to all in the form and the measure that our conscience dictates to us."

When the Alsatians were permitted by Germany to send deputies to the Reichstag, the fifteen who were elected protested on their side against annexation February 18, 1874. We find in their declaration the following passage: "In choosing us all, just as we are, our electors before everything else

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wish to affirm their sympathy with France and their right to govern themselves." These solemn declarations have never been revoked by any equivalent or contrary statement. Not even during the actual war and reign of terror established in the annexed provinces has the German Government succeeded in forcing from the representatives of Alsace-Lorraine a statement expressing the desire to remain German. The attempt to make such a manifestation by the votes of the council-generals, of whom the suspected members had previously been deported to Germany, saying that the economic interest of Alsace-Lorraine necessitated the maintenance of the *status quo*, only served to demonstrate the insecurity of the political situation of the German Empire in Alsace-Lorraine. What lamentable drivel in comparison to the dignified and generous language of the magnificent protests of Bordeaux. It accords well with the philosophy of German diction which the Baron de Bulach, Secretary of State, jeeringly dared recom-

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mend to his compatriots as a line of conduct: "*Wess Brod ich ess des Lied ich sing*" (Whose bread I eat, his song I sing).

Nothing, moreover, would be less exact than to think that the Alsatians lived on the Germans or that their material well-being depended in any way on the economic life of the German Empire, or that the prosperity of the country was in all, or even in great part, to be credited to the Germans.

It is not within the scope of our essay to present a study of the economic situation of the country, which, if she has been prosperous in some directions, has often been hindered by the predominance given to rival interests of other German countries. The project of constructing a canal from Ludwigshafen to Strasbourg was abandoned because contrary to the interests of the town of Mannheim. The canalling of the Sarre and of the Moselle was basely sacrificed to the interests of the Prussian industries of la Ruhr, which looked with an enemy's eye on any progress in the industry of Lorraine.

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The prohibition of American plants for the replacing of the destroyed vines, in execution of the law concerning the fight against the blight of the vine, was dictated by a sentiment of protection for the German vine culture against the vine-culture of Alsace-Lorraine. Often also, the administration took arbitrary measure against certain trades and industries to injure their interests for the profit of their competitors, or for some determined political end. The illegal prohibition made to the French Insurance companies of Assurances to continue business in Alsace-Lorraine, by which a blow was given to a number of agents in their enterprises, and the threat made to the Alsatian Society of Mechanical Construction of Grafenstaden to countermand the orders from Prussia if the Society refused to dismiss a director suspected of French sympathy, are convincing proofs of the antagonism of the government. We mention the flagrant injustice with which the German interests were always advanced to the detriment of Alsace-

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Lorraine in the distribution of contracts for public works. But, if Alsace-Lorraine in general could prosper economically, notwithstanding a detestable policy, hated by its population, in what way, we ask ourselves, could that prosperity be compromised by the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France? Above all, as France is a Republic, a form of government which was welcomed with joy by the people September 4, 1870, and which answers in the best manner to their time-honoured worldly aspirations. The loss of the market which Alsace-Lorraine has made for herself in Germany will find a rapid offset in the reopening of its business relations with France.

Certain great industries, such as the iron mines of Lorraine and those of potash in Alsace, would certainly increase. But that is not at all the question. We have to do with a great moral issue for transcending the material considerations which the German thinks so important and which in his mind are all-conclusive. Evidence of this

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is the following quotation from the *Gazette de Voss* published July, 1917: "The act of yielding Alsace would involve giving up valuable beds of potash and this would be disastrous to German agriculture of which it is an absolutely necessary ingredient." One sees by this kind of reasoning the nature of the affection of Germany for Alsace-Lorraine.

ALSACE-LORRAINE UNDER GERMAN RULE

1871

It would take volumes to describe in detail the martyrdom of Alsace-Lorraine under the domination of Germany. I can enumerate only a few of the acts and methods that have characterized German rule. The impartial reader will easily conclude that Alsatians are not made to live with Germans and that the return of their province to the mother country of France is the only possible solution of the Alsatian question with justice and equity.

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Alsace-Lorraine was given to the German Empire unconditionally. The new master could do with the country just as he pleased. If he has not divided it between the members of the Confederation it is because it was difficult to agree on the division of the spoils, and because also Bismarck wished to make a "glacis" which would cement the union of the Germans by continually showing them the danger that threatened in the west. The only thing the Germans did not think of in deciding the fate of Alsace-Lorraine was the interest of the Alsatians themselves. Bismarck did not hesitate to acknowledge this and stated in the Reichstag to the first deputies who protested: "It is not for your interest that we have conquered you, but for the interest of the Empire." And the official paper of Strasbourg, the *Strassburger Post*, after forty years of German domination, also summarizes the attitude of the German Empire towards the Alsatians in this odious phrase: *Oderint dum metuant* (Let them hate, so long as they fear). The German Empire,

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which is composed of twenty-five confederated States, made of the annexed territory a "Reichsland," that is to say, an undivided joint property. This new political entity received the name of Elsass-Lothringen (Alsace-Lorraine). German scholars are still arguing today over the legal aspect of this decision. It is certain, as against the German states which possess equal rights, that Alsace-Lorraine is arbitrarily ruled by the Empire without any inherent right. Alsace-Lorraine was always treated as a State when it was a question of meeting certain obligations (contributions, military service, assessments for the expenses of the Empire). The honour was even paid of trusting them with the receipt of custom-house dues for the account of the Empire on their territory. This brought upon the province an unwarranted outlay of more than a million marks a year, representing the excess of the customs above the amount refunded to the Provinces. Alsace-Lorraine possessed only those "rights" which the Empire grudgingly conceded. Whereas

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Louis XV. accorded to the provinces united to France the enjoyment of their ancient privileges, the German Empire began by treating the Alsatians less liberally than its German subjects. In Germany each state has the constitution it wishes for itself, but Alsace-Lorraine has a constitution imposed upon it by the Empire, and this can be suspended or suppressed at the Imperial will.

The different constitutions that have been granted in the course of forty-two years (the latest went into effect in 1912) to the Reichsland, which had been ruled by a dictatorship as a legal constitution, were alike in this, that the legislative and the executive powers were left completely in the hands of the Kaiser and the King of Prussia. The Kaiser exercises the power of the state (*Staatsgewalt*) for the account of the Empire. There is a Parliament (*Landtag*) made up of two Chambers to which the second is given universal suffrage, and the first (of which I had the honour of being a member, elected by the town of Colmar) composed in a way to assure a

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majority to the Kaiser, who has the right to name as many members as the number of those elected and those holding by right. As there are members not named for life, and as among those who are so by right and by choice there are always a large number who are not independent, the Kaiser can never be in the minority in the Senate. But if by any chance such a thing should happen, it could have no importance because the Kaiser is himself the chief factor in legislation. In order that a law for Alsace-Lorraine may come into force, it must have the consent of the two Chambers and of the Emperor. Under these conditions it is Prussia that rules, and I know that no attempt to pass a law in Alsace-Lorraine can be made without first obtaining a favourable opinion from the Ministry of Prussia. In order never to be thwarted by the passive resistance of the Second Chamber, our constitution, which the Germans characterize as democratic, provides that if Parliament refuses to vote the budget, the government has the right to incur expenditure

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based on the figures of the preceding budget. The Germans have wished to emphasize as a great concession to the claims of Alsace-Lorraine the fact that in the last constitution given to Reichsland they have been given a voice in the *Bundesrat* (Federal Council). This *Bundesrat* is composed of the representatives of the Chief of the States of the Empire. It is this council that with the consent of the Reichstag, which is the representative of the German people, gave universal suffrage and that makes the laws for the Empire. Now, owing to the importance of territory and number of inhabitants, Alsace-Lorraine ought to hold sixth rank among the States of the Empire. She has been given three votes in the Council. But, as it is the *Staatshalter* (Vice-King) of Alsace-Lorraine who gives the instructions as to how those three votes will be cast, and as the Vice-King is an office-holder subject to recall by the Emperor who is the King of Prussia, there is no danger that those votes will ever operate against Prussia. This dependence on Prussia of the votes

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of Alsace-Lorraine has been disingenuously marked by a special provision inserted on this occasion in the constitution of the Empire, in which it is said that every time a favourable majority vote for Prussia cannot be polled in the *Bundesrat* except with the help of the Alsatian vote, those votes will not be counted. Up to this day Alsace-Lorraine has never ceased to be governed by a legislation outside of the common right. Today even, an act is pending in Berlin which provides exceptional measures for the suppression of journals printed in French.

All the efforts of the Germans, the special legislation for Alsace-Lorraine, the activities of the functionaries, chiefly Germans brought from the four corners of the Empire, even the administration of justice, have had the tendency to exterminate and replace by the *Deutschtum* (German culture) the spirit and the sentiments of the French people.

All this effort and labour were doomed to failure. The Alsatians remained faithful to their ideals and to the policy expressed in

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their protest. Of course the form of this protest has changed with the current of events. The simple negation which marked the solemn protests of Bordeaux in 1871 and of Berlin in 1874 could not after the lapse of time, and should not now, determine the conduct of the people. The first necessity is to continue to exist, and there were finally organized political parties which fought passionately, as happens in every country in the world. But towards the Germans the real Alsatians were as one man as soon as some particular occasion presented itself, to show their aversion to the *Herrenvolk* (the dominant people), as it pleased the Germans to call themselves. The demand of self-government for Alsace-Lorraine within the limits of the German Empire was only one way of showing the desire to be distinguished as much as possible from the Germans. It was the maximum that the Alsatians could legally require but the minimum of her real claim which always demanded the absolute return to France, the mother country.

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A very suggestive fact on this subject is that, in the electoral struggles between the natives, the different parties did not hesitate to mutually reproach each other with the desire to lean on the will or the influence of Germany.

The first demonstration against the Germans was the exodus of a part of the population. The annual emigration continued until the War of 1914. Another sign of protest was the considerable number of *refractaires* (defaulting conscripts) who up to that day had annually left the country by the hundreds to avoid German military service. Their property was seized and they never could return to the country. The greater number entered the Foreign Legion to fight for France.

The French language continued to be spoken in the family, notwithstanding all the governmental precautions to insure its disuse. Families continued to send their children to France to learn French, young girls particularly being placed in French boarding schools

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to complete their instruction and education. Up to that time commercial books had been published in French, bookkeeping was done in francs, even in those houses where the circumstances made it necessary to use the German language simultaneously. The condemnation of seditious utterances and the wearing of seditious emblems were no longer noticed and never ceased. The public has specially marked the case of conspicuous persons who have been implicated in prosecutions (the Samain brothers, Hausi and Zislin, the caricaturists, the Abbé Wétterlie), but alongside of these cases, thousands of obscure soldiers of the Alsace-Lorraine cause, victims of their attachment to France, have paid their tribute to their country. For shouting "*Vive la France!*", for singing of the *Marseillaise*, for showing a tri-colour ribbon, innumerable sentences, in some cases running into years of imprisonment, have been pronounced. When, in 1887, the situation in France, under the influence of the Boulanger movement, disclosed the possibility of a conflict at arms

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with Germany, the election of the Reichstag for that year resulted in sending to Berlin a protesting deputation, notwithstanding the tremendous governmental pressure put upon the electors. That was the signal for increased persecutions in Alsace-Lorraine. Student societies, singing classes, athletic associations, people suspected of cultivating French sympathies, newspapers showing French tendencies, all of these were suppressed and the members of the League of Patriots were betrayed and condemned for high treason. Bismarck introduced the régime of passports to cut off all relations between Alsace-Lorraine and France. The *Statthalter* of Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, at that moment governor of Alsace-Lorraine, has said in his *Mémoires* that he had the impression that Bismarck wished to drive the population to insurrection. This plan fell through, thanks to the wisdom of the people who knew how to resist such a provocation. The result was simply to strengthen French patriotism. The rising generation which had gone through

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the German schools and German army fooled the German statesmen who had counted on them for the assimilation of German *Kultur*. On the contrary, these young people were most ardent in manifesting their devotion to France. Better prepared for the struggle than their elders, knowing the German language perfectly, familiarized by their studies with the Teuton dialects, they became most formidable adversaries. My comrade in combat, Jacques Preiss, killed during this war, a victim of German persecutions, has very well described the character and rôle of the youth in a discourse given in the Reichstag in 1894. He said: "We young fellows, we are not of the generation of 1870 whom choice and emigration have deprived of elements which are the firmest and most unresisting. If you do not introduce a more liberal régime, you will find by experience that this new generation is much more energetically opposed to fusion than has been the case since 1870."

In fact, not only has Germanization made

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no progress, but the Alsatians become each day more impatient of the German yoke. The two populations, the native and immigrant, have never had social intercourse. The native societies or clubs have always been closed to the immigrant. On the National Fête, July 14th, the Alsatians will cross the frontier by tens of thousands to partake communion under the religion of their own land and with their brothers of France. They return with the tri-colour ribbon in their buttonholes, and this creates each year a number of unpleasant incidents. In vain Germany wished to change the appearance of things by trying to win the masses, by means of a lower chamber elected by general suffrage. We have shown the factitious value of this concession, which as a consequence only increased opposition. The affair of Grafenstaden, and the trouble at Saverne caused by the attempt to cover up the exactions of a young lieutenant, brought indignation to a climax. The military authorities arrested haphazard the civilian natives and even the German immigrants,

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instituting in the midst of peace, a military dictatorship and aroused the irreconcilable antagonism between the German mentality and that of Alsace-Lorraine. After some slight attempts of independence on the part of the Alsace-Lorraine government and the Reichstag *vis-à-vis* the military, the whole German world fell upon the obstinate and hard-headed Alsatians who, according to them, were the cause of all the trouble because they refused to admire the beauty of the German *Kultur*. The Saverne affair resulted in the dismissal of the government of Alsace-Lorraine which had among its officials two won-over Alsatians, and the replacing this by a group of Prussians of rank.

The Minister of War, General von Falkenhayn, announced to the Reichstag: "We want to uproot from the people's mind the feeling that has been manifested up to this time and which has provoked the Saverne incident." And this feeling is none other than the French democratic, republican spirit of the Alsatians, incompatible with Prussian militarism."

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On the same occasion, Deputy von Calker, unfortunate candidate from Strasbourg, but elected in a Prussian district, and an exceptionally friendly immigrant, confessed in the following fashion the defeat of Germanization in Alsace-Lorraine, shouting aloud in the Reichstag: "I cry out in anguish. For sixteen years I have worked to wipe out misunderstanding and to reconcile the natives and the immigrants, and now we have arrived at the point where we can say, It all again amounts to nothing (*Kaput*)." The conservatives very wisely answered this undeceived elector that if it was merely the Saverne incident that had caused this failure, it was evident that the desired harmony had rested on a very slender foundation.

Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg was conscious of the great mistake that had been made in annexing Alsace-Lorraine and had a foreboding of the coming loss of the Reichsland. He thus expresses himself in a letter written June 21, 1903, to Professor Lamprecht at Leipzig: "We are a young nation;

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we have yet perhaps too much naïve faith in force, we make too little importance of subtle measures, and we do not understand that those who are conquered by force cannot be kept by force alone."

The prefect of police at Berlin, von Jagow, declared in January, 1914, in relation to the Saverne affair: "The Germans in Alsace are in an enemy country." And during this war more than one German general has said to his troops at the time of marching into Alsace-Lorraine: "Now we will march into the enemy country."

It is easy to imagine what has been the fate of the country since the opening of hostilities. It is the reign of terror. In the first place persons inscribed on the black list, that is to say, those most suspected, have been arrested and imprisoned. Those, who like the author, have succeeded in escaping the talons of the Germans, have been the objects of prosecution for so-called high treason, liable to capital punishment. They have had their property seized and—supreme mis-

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fortune—they have been declared to have forfeited their German nationality. The future only will tell us the fate of those who were captured. The suspects not on the list and the families of the imprisoned were by thousands deported into Germany. The Council of War was in permanent operation. It gave sentences of thousands of years of imprisonment with hard labour against Alsatians guilty of the slightest anti-German manifestation or for the simplest token of sympathy given the French prisoners or the wounded. All classes of society fill the prisons. The penalties imposed on persons having committed the crime of speaking French have been so numerous that a facetious jailor said to a lady, who with tears in her eyes appeared at the prison door: "Do not weep, Madam, you will be in good society here, for this is the only spot where one still speaks French." The summary executions can no longer be counted. Only the crimes committed by the Germans in Belgium can surpass the horrors practised in Alsace-Lorraine.

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The French sentiment showed its greatest strength in the wholesale desertion of the Alsatians to take service in the French army; and also by the fact that the Alsace-Lorrainers, made prisoners of war by the French, have asked to be enrolled in the French army. Many of the Alsatians, who had the chance to go to the colonies so as not to run the risk of being shot as "traitors" in case of being captured by the Germans, have begged to be sent to the front to fight the Germans, thus risking their lives twice in the service of France. I think I am understating the truth in estimating at 30,000, the number of Alsatians who were mobilized in the German forces and who have gone over to the ranks of the French army. The latter has always had a great attraction for the Alsatian, and whereas the number of Alsatians serving as officers in the German army does not amount to a dozen, of whom only one is a brigadier-general, the French army has thousands of Alsatian officers among whom are hundreds of generals. It is the same thing among the

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civilians. Many office-holders of all grades are of Alsatian origin, whereas the Alsatian who has accepted an office or looked for any general position in Germany is exceptional. Wherever the French troops have been able to penetrate into Alsace-Lorraine, they have been received with enthusiasm, and when they were obliged to retreat many people followed them into France in order to escape the reprisals which were waiting for them.

With the press muzzled and the severe censorship of letters, it will be only after the war that we shall have exact knowledge of what Alsace-Lorraine has passed through during this dreadful period. But what we are certain of at present is that the attitude of the people is the same now as in the past. The Alsatians, faithful in their devotion to France, await with a patriotic impatience, but with an unshaken faith in the victory of their holy cause, their deliverance from the German yoke.

Deputy Preiss, already quoted, was able to say to the Reichstag, June 30, 1896: "The

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assimilation, the germanization has not taken a single step forward. . . . It is terror that governs and poisons our political life. The government does not understand the people and the people do not understand the government. . . . History will say, The German Empire was able to conquer Alsace-Lorraine materially, but was not able to conquer her morally; she has not known how to win the heart and the soul of the people."

Is it not like a paraphrase of the celebrated verse so often sung all through the country:

"Vous n'aurez pas l'Alsace et la Lorraine
Et malgré vous nous resterons Français!
Vous avez pu germaniser le plaine,
Mais notre cœur, vous ne l'aurez jamais!"

"Alsace-Lorraine ne'er will you own,
In spite of you, Frenchmen are we,
Others may serve with a curse and a groan,
But ever our hearts shall be free!"?

The situation has never changed. This is what one could read a short time before

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the war in a book of Professor Forster's of Munich in a study on the failure of German policy in the frontier provinces: "Alsace, a country of arch-German origin, forty years after her return to Germany, has still to an astonishing degree French sympathies, or at least it has no German sympathies. After more than forty years, we have not been able to re-Germanize this population."

Let us finish by another German testimony. This is how, from the *Matin*, July 18, 1917, the *Kieler Zeitung* expresses itself on the results of the germanization of Alsace-Lorraine: "The wise conservatives thought that thanks to the reunion under the established rule of the Empire, they could reconcile two provinces different from each other, and having in common only an arrogant defiance of the ambitions of the Empire."

This confidence was an ignominious mistake. Lorraine bound itself solidly and stubbornly to French congenial ideas, vigorously developed in her in a large measure by the mother tongue; while, as to Alsace, she

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was like the twig of a German bough strayed away from its ethnic tree and rotted to the core by French climate. They can be reclaimed neither by benevolence nor by force.

One understands why the German press and the German government are interested in the dismemberment of Alsace-Lorraine and their division between the Confederated States without thought of taking the opinion of the people. Such opinion counts for nothing with the rulers of the country, because the sentiments of the people are already well known. They are French and for that reason Alsace-Lorraine will, without the slightest difficulty, again become French. In an article of the *Revue de Paris*, January, 1914 ("The Sentiments of Alsace-Lorraine"), at a time when the question seemed to have only a theoretical interest, I attempted to make this clear.

That which the author of the article in the *Kieler Zeitung*, in his ill-tempered German hatred, calls "rottenness" is, I contend, the gentle radiance of the French spirit. It is

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